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UNCLAS ISLAMABAD 000465

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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: MARCH 03, 2009

Summary: Reports on national political developments dominated headlines in all newspapers on Tuesday. News of a suicide attack on a seminary in Pishin (Balochistan) killing five people received front page coverage in all dailies. Newspapers highlighted the NWFP Chief Minister Hoti's remarks that the "anti-state forces were out to derail Swat deal." The English language daily, "Dawn," in a Washington datelined story reported that the "U.S. plans \$5 billion help to boost Pakistani economy." Senator Raza Rabbani's statement that the "Parliamentary Committee on National Security will present its initial report on stopping U.S. drone attacks soon" received prominent display.

Most major dailies ran in-depth editorials on the government's decision to set up "mobile courts" in the country and discussed its implications. However, the centrist national daily, "The News," commented on the peace deal in Swat and noted that "any hope of a lasting peace that allows people to resume normal lives can come only when the militants are vanquished and their leaders punished for the crimes they have committed." Whereas, the Islamabad-based daily, "Pakistan Observer," observed that "it is quite understood that the decision-makers in Islamabad changed their mind under foreign pressure but now that peace has been established it can sustain only if the Government delivers on its pledge..." The Peshawar-based Urdu daily, "Mashriq," raised a question that "if the government can promulgate the Mobile Courts Ordinance recently, why could not it move forward on the implementation of the 'Nizam-e-Adal' in Swat as well?" End Summary.

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News Stories  
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"Five Killed In Suicide Attack on Pishin Madarassa" "Dawn" (03/03)

"At least five people were killed and five others injured when a suicide bomber hit a Madarassa in Killi Karbala in the Pishin district (Balochistan) on Monday."

"Anti-State Forces Out To Derail Swat Deal: Hoti" "Dawn" (03/03)

"Chief Minister Ameer Haider Khan Hoti has said that some foreign forces and anti-Pakistan elements who do not want peace in Swat are conspiring to sabotage the accord the government has reached with TNSM Chief Maulana Sufi Mohammad."

"U.S. Plans \$5 Billion Help To Boost Pakistani Economy" "Dawn" (03/03)

"Providing economic assistance to Pakistan is high on the priority list of the U.S. administration and lawmakers who also are considering a proposal to give a one-time assistance of \$5 billion to help stabilize the Pakistani economy, diplomatic sources to 'Dawn.'"

"Drone Attacks Report Soon: Rabbani" "The News" (03/03)

"Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination Senator Raza Rabbani on Monday said the Parliamentary Committee on National Security has agreed to present to the current session of the National Assembly its initial recommendatory report on stopping U.S. drone attacks and ensuring peace in tribal areas."

"PM Vows To Back NWFP Government On Swat Peace Deal" "The News" (03/03)

"Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Monday expressed his resolve to fully back the NWFP government on the peace deal in Swat and assured the complete support of his government for the early rehabilitation of the internally displaced people."

"Taliban To Lay Down, Not Surrender, Their Arms" "Dawn" (03/03)

"The NWFP government has been trying to persuade the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan-Swat to merely 'lay down their arms' rather than 'surrender' them, Haji Adeel, a senior Vice-President of the Awami National Party, said in an interview to Dawn News TV said on Monday."

"NATO Troops To Stay Away From Pakistan" "The News" (03/03)

"NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said on Monday NATO troops would not enter Pakistan under any circumstances at the Pak-Afghan border, not even in self-defence or carrying out hot pursuit. Speaking at a special briefing for Pakistani editors at the NATO headquarters, Brussels, the Secretary-General said the NATO forces were operating inside Afghanistan under a UN Security Council mandate and this mandate did not include Pakistan."

"Musharraf For U.S.-Taliban Talks" "The Post" (03/03)

"Former President Pervez Musharraf has stated that increasing American marines in Afghanistan is not the solution of the matter and in the end America has to seek dialogue process to restore peace in the region. Talking to BBC, he said that America has to sign agreements with Afghan chieftains on the norms as were committed centuries ago and it could be sole solution for the Afghan issue."

"Gates Convinced Of Pak Resolve Against Militancy" "The News - website" (03/03)

"U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates has said he is convinced of Pakistan's recognition of the importance to address militancy along its Afghan border. He declared in an interview that the key to enforcing stability along the tribal areas is the United States' enabling Islamabad to deal with the problem on its own sovereign territory."

"U.S. Mortars Hit Pak Border Village" "The News" (03/03)

"At least 17 mortar shells were fired by the U.S.-led coalition forces at Ghulam Khan village in North Waziristan Agency on Pak-Afghan border on Monday evening."

"Sealing Of Capital Planned To Stop Lawyers' Protest: Govt." "Dawn" (03/03)

"The government has decided to use all its resources to scuttle the lawyers' long march, including the sealing of the capital. The decision was taken in a meeting between President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani at the President' House."

"Mush Exists In Zardari: Nawaz" "The News" (03/03)

"Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Quaid Nawaz Sharif said on Monday that the spirit of former President Pervez Musharraf had possessed Asif Ali Zardari who had violated the mandate of the people of Punjab by imposing governor's rule there."

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Editorials/Op-eds  
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"Peace Deal In Swat Must Not Spoiled By Misunderstanding," an editorial in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily "Mashriq" (cir. 55,000) (03/03)

"Sufi Mohammad while expressing his distrust over the government's insufficient actions regarding the imposition of the 'Nizam-e-Adl' (Shariat laws) in Swat valley gave a deadline of fifteen days for substantial progress in this regard... It seems that the government is not taking the peace deal in Swat seriously, otherwise if it can promulgate the Mobile Courts Ordinance recently, why it could not move forward on the implementation of the Nizam-e-Adl in Swat as well?"

"Don't Let Anyone Destroy Peace Now," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (03/03)

"The Frontier government and local Taliban should keep a strict vigil on elements wanting to sabotage the Swat peace agreement. The Frontier government should ensure establishment of Shariah based justice system before the expiry of Maulana Sufi Muhammad's deadline."

"Shaky In Swat," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (03/03)

"There are indications that Sufi Muhammad is under immense pressure from more hard-line militants led by his son-in-law to step up demands on the government. It is increasingly clear that the truce in Swat cannot hold. Any hope of a lasting peace that allows people to resume normal lives can come only when the militants are vanquished and their leaders punished for the crimes they have committed. Until this happens, we will see, at best, only temporary solutions in Swat while the hold of militants grows steadily stronger as a result of the failure to decisively crush them."

"Let Swat Deal Not Slip Out Of Hand," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (03/03)

"The attitude of the Federal Government is highly lamentable and this could become the cause for failure of the nicely devised arrangement.... It is quite understood that the decision-makers in Islamabad changed their mind under foreign pressure but now that peace has been established it can sustain only if the Government delivers on its pledge.... Unnecessary delay in this regard under foreign pressure and that too at this critical juncture would be unforgivable."

"Strains In Swat," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (03/03)

"The arrangement in Swat is not acceptable to Washington, which is keen to resolve the issue of militancy through military means alone. It is now clear that Pakistan's delegation has failed to effectively plead its case during the ongoing review of the Obama Administration's regional policy.... perception is also being formed that the government has bowed to U.S. pressure to continue the military operation in Swat. Unless Islamabad takes a stand in support of the Swat accord, it is likely to be accused by the opposition of bartering away the country's interests for small gains."

"Atrophy Of Muslim Utopia," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (03/03)

"If the idea was to buy peace with shariah in Swat, it is not working so far.... Meanwhile, the Taliban have not stopped attacking convoys and kidnapping soldiers to use as bargain counters.... A much bigger damage is being done, however. The people of Pakistan were hoping that Shariah would bring about the Islamic utopia in Swat which strangely fulfills the requirements of a set-piece city state where conditions of the ideal state could be

created."

"Drone Attacks - U.S. doesn't Want Peace In Region," an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (03/03)

"No sooner Foreign Minister Qureshi and Army Chief Kiyani returned back to Pakistan from the U.S., American drones hit the South Waziristan another time. With this attack, the U.S. has sent a very clear and loud message that it is not going to stop drone attacks. And it also shows that the U.S. administration does not trust the Pakistani government and its army."

"For How Long Pakistan Will Tolerate These Strikes?," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-right sensationalist Urdu daily "Ummat" (cir. 33,000) (03/03)

"The latest U.S. missile attacks killed about 12 people in the area of South Waziristan, which as usual dubbed by the western media as foreigners. Such claims on various occasions in the past proved false, as people claimed to be killed showed up later on. For how long Pakistan will tolerate these strikes? There are several steps that Pakistan can take to stop this violence: first, stop cooperation in the global war on terror, and second, discontinue logistic support to the NATO troops in Afghanistan. Pakistan Government must understand that unless it convinces the Obama administration to end these attacks, law and order situation will remain unchanged."

"Need For All Possible Steps For Release Of John Solecki," an editorial note in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (03/03)

"The United Nations did not play any commendable role for the release of Solecki. Whatever the reality, the kidnappers should release the hostage in the name of humanity and the government should use all the resources to recover him."

"Rein In The Kidnappers," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (03/03)

"Given the image of the country as one of the most dangerous places on earth projected in large part because of the accusation that it is a nursery of militants and a threat to the life of foreigners, the kidnapping of Mr. Solecki, who happens to be a U.S. citizen, has proven to be another source of disgrace. The PM's Interior Adviser, rather than wasting his time on errands which do not fall in his purview, ought to gear up to secure his release and improve the security situation of the country in general."

GFeierstein